

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1           1.    A multi-function customer satisfaction survey  
2 device comprising:  
3           a tip tray for holding a customer's payment for food  
4 in a restaurant; and  
5           means within the tray for obtaining and storing  
6 responses from the customer regarding a level of customer  
7 satisfaction.

1           2.    The multi-function customer satisfaction survey  
2 device of claim 1 wherein the means within the tray for  
3 obtaining and storing responses from the customer  
4 includes:  
5           a visual display that presents customer satisfaction  
6 survey questions to the customer;  
7           a keypad for entering the customer's responses to  
8 the survey questions;  
9           a memory that stores the customer responses; and  
10          a processor that sends survey questions to the  
11 display, collects responses from the keypad, and sends  
12 the responses to the memory.

1           3.    The multi-function customer satisfaction survey  
2 device of claim 2 further comprising an external  
3 communications link in communication with the processor,

4 said processor retrieving the responses from the memory  
5 and downloading the responses to an external data  
6 collection unit utilizing the communications link.

1 4. The multi-function customer satisfaction survey  
2 device of claim 2 further comprising a paging transmitter  
3 in communication with the processor that pages a  
4 restaurant manager when a customer response meets  
5 predetermined criteria, and wherein the processor  
6 includes logic for determining whether a response meets  
7 the predetermined criteria.

1 5. The multi-function customer satisfaction survey  
2 device of claim 1 further comprising an electronic  
3 calculator within the tray.

1 6. The multi-function customer satisfaction survey  
2 device of claim 5 wherein the means within the tray for  
3 obtaining and storing responses from the customer  
4 includes:

5 a visual display that presents customer satisfaction  
6 survey questions to the customer;

7 a survey keypad for entering the customer's  
8 responses to the survey questions;

9 a memory that stores the customer responses; and

10           a processor that sends survey questions to the  
11 display, collects responses from the survey keypad, and  
12 sends the responses to the memory.

1           7. The multi-function customer satisfaction survey  
2 device of claim 6 wherein the calculator includes a  
3 numerical calculator keypad, and the processor collects  
4 inputs from the calculator keypad, performs calculations,  
5 and displays results of the calculations on the visual  
6 display.

1           8. A system for obtaining and storing responses  
2 from a customer regarding a level of customer  
3 satisfaction, said system comprising:

4           a tip tray that includes means within the tray for  
5 obtaining and storing responses from the customer  
6 regarding the level of customer satisfaction; and

7           a base unit that collects the responses from the  
8 tray.

1           9. The system for obtaining and storing responses  
2 from a customer of claim 8 wherein the tip tray also  
3 includes a calculator.

1           10. The system for obtaining and storing responses  
2 from a customer of claim 9 wherein the means within the  
3 tray for obtaining and storing responses from the  
4 customer includes:

5           a visual display that presents customer satisfaction  
6 survey questions to the customer;

7           a survey keypad for entering the customer's  
8 responses to the survey questions;

9           a memory that stores the customer responses; and

10          a tray processor that sends survey questions to the  
11 display, collects responses from the keypad, and sends  
12 the responses to the memory.

1           11. The system for obtaining and storing responses  
2 from a customer of claim 10 further comprising an  
3 external communications link in communication with the  
4 tray processor, said tray processor retrieving the  
5 responses from the memory and downloading the responses  
6 to the base unit utilizing the communications link.

1           12. The system for obtaining and storing responses  
2 from a customer of claim 11 further comprising a paging  
3 transmitter in communication with the tray processor that  
4 pages a restaurant manager when a customer response meets  
5 predetermined criteria, and wherein the tray processor

6 includes logic for determining whether a response meets  
7 the predetermined criteria.

1 13. The system for obtaining and storing responses  
2 from a customer of claim 12 wherein the base unit  
3 includes a battery recharger connected to a power pin,  
4 and the tray includes a rechargeable battery connected to  
5 a power receptacle, and the battery is recharged by  
6 stacking the tray on the base unit so that the power pin  
7 on the base unit is in contact with the power receptacle  
8 on the tray.

1 14. The system for obtaining and storing responses  
2 from a customer of claim 13 wherein the base unit also  
3 includes a base unit processor connected to a data pin,  
4 and the tray includes a data receptacle connected to the  
5 external communications link, said base unit processor  
6 using the communications link to program the tray  
7 processor with survey questions, and to download from the  
8 tray memory, the customer responses.

1 15. The system for obtaining and storing responses  
2 from a customer of claim 14 further comprising a  
3 plurality of trays that stack on top each other on the  
4 base unit, each of said trays having a power pin and a  
5 data pin that align with a power receptacle and a data

6 receptacle, respectively, on an adjacently stacked tray,  
7 whereby the recharger recharges the battery in all of the  
8 stacked trays simultaneously, the base unit processor  
9 programs all of the stacked trays simultaneously, and the  
10 base unit processor downloads customer responses from all  
11 of the stacked trays simultaneously.

1 16. The system for obtaining and storing responses  
2 from a customer of claim 15 further comprising an  
3 analysis function remotely located from the base unit,  
4 wherein the base unit includes a communications port  
5 through which the collected responses are communicated to  
6 the analysis function.

1 17. The system for obtaining and storing responses  
2 from a customer of claim 16 wherein the analysis function  
3 is resident on a personal computer (PC), and the  
4 communications port comprises an RS232 interface.

1 18. The system for obtaining and storing responses  
2 from a customer of claim 17 wherein the analysis function  
3 is resident on a remote computer, and the communications  
4 port communicates with the remote computer over a global  
5 computer network.

1           19. The system for obtaining and storing responses  
2 from a customer of claim 18 further comprising a  
3 plurality of base units connected in series to a smart  
4 base, said smart base being connected to the analysis  
5 function.

1           20. A method of obtaining and storing responses  
2 from a customer regarding a level of customer  
3 satisfaction, said method comprising the steps of:  
4           presenting customer survey questions to the customer  
5 on a display screen mounted in a tip tray;  
6           collecting the customer's responses to the survey  
7 questions with a survey keypad mounted in the tip tray;  
8           and  
9           storing the customer responses in a memory in the  
10 tip tray.

1           21. The method of obtaining and storing responses  
2 from a customer of claim 20 further comprising  
3 downloading the customer responses to a database.

1           22. The method of obtaining and storing responses  
2 from a customer of claim 20 further comprising offering  
3 the customer a chance to win a prize in exchange for  
4 participating in the customer satisfaction survey.